

TRIP TO THE OLYMPICS



Take the class with you to the Olympics. Many aspects of this activity can be done seated.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Uses fun and imagination to create new ideas in movement.
- ⦿ Keeps participants active for 5 to 10 minutes.

How to Do It »

In this activity, participants are novice athletes with Olympic fantasies—they want to try out all the Olympic sports they can. Perhaps you can ask them for their favorite events or events they'd like to try. Your goal is to involve as many major joints and muscle groups as possible in the chosen activities. Ideas are presented here for both upper- and lower-body exercises. If you like, all of these activities can be done while seated.

Opening Ceremonies

- ⦿ Imagine the grandeur and excitement. Lift your head up and look around; breathe in all the sights, sounds, and excitement. Turn your head right and left to see; get jostled by the crowd; get out of somebody's way who is in a big hurry. Wow, this is amazing!
- ⦿ March in the stadium. Big knees marching. You're an athlete! Big, puffed-up chest.
- ⦿ Carry the flag as the athletes march in.
- ⦿ Wave to the crowds, turn your whole body to wave all around.
- ⦿ Grab your camera from a back pocket and snap pictures.
- ⦿ Turn and twist, looking all around to take in the sights.
- ⦿ Light the torch. Stand or sit tall with a torch held high in one hand. Then in the other hand.

Swimming

- ⦿ Get ready, get set, (whistle!) dive in the water at the bell.
- ⦿ Swim multiple events or work on just one. The crawl (freestyle), breaststroke, backstroke, or any stroke that can be done fluidly. (Make the race close—competition gets people to push themselves.) Swim vertically (upwards) to strengthen back extensors.
- ⦿ Work on the breathing in the crawl stroke. Change arms and breathe out the other side. Inhale, exhale, and take big breaths.

Diving

- ⦿ Climb the big ladder. Arms and knees climb a ladder.
- ⦿ Jump (imaginatively, not literally). You can do any dive you want!
- ⦿ Use your arms to create a dive—swan, half-twist, or whatever you can do from your chair.

Volleyball

- ⦿ Warm up your hands and fingers for the match (rub them together, wriggle and crunch the fingers, flex and extend them, do wrist circles).
- ⦿ Serve the ball.
- ⦿ Reach up and spike the ball to win the point.

- ⦿ Change arms and spike again with that arm.
- ⦿ Dig out a save from the right side of the chair (two straight arms get under a low ball and pop it up).
- ⦿ Dig out a save from the left side of the chair.
- ⦿ Set up a ball so your neighbor can spike it.
- ⦿ Jump to block a ball that's flying over the net.

Basketball

- ⦿ Play some Olympic basketball from the chairs using an imaginary ball.
- ⦿ Dribble with one hand and then with the other.
- ⦿ Pass the ball behind your back and dribble some more.
- ⦿ Pass the ball to your neighbor on the right, then the left.
- ⦿ Use your back to block another player trying to get by you.
- ⦿ Catch a pass.
- ⦿ Quickly move among the other players to get to the basket.
- ⦿ Shoot a basket. You shoot, you score!
- ⦿ Reach up for a rebound. Get it and then use your elbows to create some space for you and the ball.

Kayaking

Sometimes it's best to separate upper- and lower-body activities. Kayaking is an excellent upper-body activity using long, double-paddled oars. Participants dip one oar in the water, drag it back, lift it out of the water, and then dig it in on the other side. Pull it back and up again. Dig right, pull back, up and center. Dig left, pull back, up and center. (This activity gives participants a chance to use reciprocal arm motions and to develop core stability.) Be sure to cue them to keep the back tall and straight, with their abdominals braced. Can they feel their strength?

- ⦿ Carry the kayak overhead to the water and put it in the water. Climb in and get comfortable. (To add more torso difficulty and balance challenge, ask participants to cross their ankles and hold their legs off the ground as they paddle.)
- ⦿ Put on your helmet and life jacket.
- ⦿ Practice the arm movements in the practice pool.
- ⦿ When ready, paddle to the starting line.
- ⦿ Backstroke to keep the kayak from moving forward until the gun fires.
- ⦿ Bang! You're off! Head down your course!
- ⦿ Look for and conquer obstacles. Turn to look at your fans in the crowd.
- ⦿ At the end, hold your paddles overhead in triumph. You did it!

Curling

Curling is a fun upper-body activity that builds both core stability and balance. The quick, sweeping motion with a broom while the torso is held still is an awesome strength challenge for the torso. The quick motions are disturbing to balance, making the activity a great balance challenge, too. Get used to curling while seated, and over time progress to trying the activity standing.

Hand participants an imaginary broom or a real stick if you have one.

- Sit at the edge of the chair, knees wide apart.
- The first stone is thrown and you're ready with your broom—sweep, sweep, sweep, sweep, sweep. (Cue them to use core stability with those strong, fast strokes!)
- Get out of the way and check the results. Looks good! Wait for the next stone.
- Here it comes—sweep, sweep, sweep.
- Continue until your stone hits your imaginary goal. Great job!

Other Upper-Body Events

Use your imagination. Gymnastics, badminton, javelin throw, synchronized swimming, archery, shooting, judo—you can include just about any activity that's fun and physically engaging. If you can imagine the possibilities, you can come up with a story.

Skating

Skating is an excellent lower-body and core-stability activity. Speed skating provides a good opportunity to practice side-to-side weight shifts. If participants are sitting, have them sit on the edge of their chair. If they're standing, have them stand behind their chair with one or both hands on the chair. The following cues are for speed skating, but try some figure skating, too—it takes upper- and lower-body grace.

- Everyone's at the starting line. Stretch, move side to side, practice the arm swings, and put on your game face.
- Assume the ready position.
- The gun goes off! Start the race.
- Right, left, right, left, with nice, even strokes (instructor calls the pace).
- Come to the first corner: right, right, right, right, right, and straighten it out.
- After a bit of straight, round the next corner: left, left, left, and so on.
- Sprint for the finish!

Track and Field

You can create both upper- and lower-body activities from track and field events. Pick a couple of activities. Long-jump arms and throwing the javelin or discus are good events for the upper body, whereas the 100-meter dash will engage the lower body. The hurdles, done from a chair (big, reciprocal arms and legs), involve both the upper and lower body.

Skiing and Snowboarding

Imaginary skiing engages both the upper and lower body. Imagine a slalom race—that means lots of turns. If participants can stand, they place their feet shoulder-width apart. Have them imagine skis on their feet and ski poles in their hands. For safety, they can stand in front of their chairs or to the side with one hand on their chair.

- Starting gate: Crouch low and then explode out of the gate (keep one hand on the chair).
 - Head down the ramp and to the jump.
 - Imagine you fly 400 feet (122 meters) standing tall over your skis. Then land with a bit of a knee bend and start your turns. On to the slalom course!

- ⊙ Slalom ski turns: Practice a turn or two first. As the knees bend and point right, the left arm reaches out (pole plants) and pulls back as you complete the turn.
- ⊙ Cross-country: Stand with one foot forward, one foot back in front of a chair. Big arm swings are offset by slight knee bends for each stroke. Pace it easy and just feel the motion. Easy does it—it's a long race up hills and around turns. Save a few sprints for the finish.
- ⊙ Snowboarding: Get on a snowboard, with one foot forward, one back. Picture the motions in your mind and then board down a hill.
 - Let the hips and torso oscillate over the board.
 - When you're ready, crouch and go for a jump.
 - Pretend to do a tip touch and come back down.
 - Bow as you collect your medal.

Fencing

Fencing benefits both the upper and lower body. Participants stand beside the chair with one foot forward, one back. They hold their saber in one hand and keep the other hand on the chair as needed for balance support.

- ⊙ Put your face shield down. It's show time.
- ⊙ Raise your saber and circle it overhead.
- ⊙ Circle it in front toward your clever opponent.
- ⊙ Lunge (knees both bend) and push the saber toward your opponent.
- ⊙ Pull back the front foot so you're standing with your feet side by side.
- ⊙ Lunge again (step forward with one foot) and push the saber out again.
- ⊙ If you're confident of your balance, do the next lunge with one hand on the hip instead of the chair.
- ⊙ Be Zorro for a moment—lunge forward and make a Z with your saber.
- ⊙ Pretend to fight many bad guys, some coming at you from the right, some from in front.
- ⊙ Watch out! You turn in time to see another opponent coming at you from behind.
- ⊙ Surprise—you're ambidextrous! Move to the other side of the chair and fence with the other hand.
- ⊙ Conquer all and take a Gentlemen's Bow. Give the crowd a big wave.